



Congratulations Prof Marcello Costa!

[Professor Marcello Costa](#), FSM Treasurer and Professor of Neurophysiology at Flinders University, has been inducted as a [Bragg Member of the Royal Institution of Australia](#) (RiAus). The prestigious Honorary Bragg Membership was named after pioneering South Australian scientists Sir William Henry Bragg and Sir William Lawrence Bragg. Fourteen of South Australia's science leaders were inducted by RiAus patron, Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent. Members include Nobel Laureates Professor Peter Doherty, Professor Brian Schmidt and Professor Barry Marshall, as well as Sir Gustav Nossal and Professor Ian Frazer.

Professor Costa joins a list of eminent Australian scientists who will assist RiAus in "*promoting public awareness and understanding of science*", by making science "*fun, inspiring and accessible for all Australians*".



FSM now has over 1,100 supporters!

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Alternative Medicine

Complementary & Alternative Medicine (CAM)

FSM recognizes that the term 'CAM' is misleading, as gentle complementary therapies like meditation and massage, should not be considered in the same category as alternative interventions that claim to cure. FSM is working on a discussion paper in this area.

Herbal Supplements

Using DNA sequencing to test the ingredients in six types of herbal supplements, looking at different brands from multiple stores, [a scientific study in the US](#) found that 79% of the supplements tested did not contain the primary ingredient listed on the label.

Many of them contained other plant material, including plants which might cause an allergic reaction in unsuspecting customers. The New York State Attorney General (AG) [sent letters](#) to four of the largest retailers of supplements in the country: [Walmart](#), [Walgreens](#), [GNC](#) and [Target](#), demanding that they immediately stop selling falsely labeled supplements, including Echinacea, ginseng, St. John's Wort, and ginkgo biloba. The retailers [agreed to pull the supplements](#) off their shelves after receiving the AG's letter.



In 2010, [nine out of 10 complementary medicine products](#) checked by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Australia were found to breach regulations.

[Another review](#) of adverse effects relating to herbal remedies and the liver found that they are no safer than conventional drugs. They have caused liver injury severe enough to require transplantation and have caused deaths. The review found that their efficacy, safety and claims are not assessed by regulatory agencies, and that there is uncertainty about their reported and unreported contents.

Vitamins

Although multivitamins are used to prevent vitamin and mineral deficiency, there is a perception that multivitamins may prevent cardiovascular disease (CVD). In a [newly published study](#) of middle-aged and elderly women, taking a daily multivitamin did not reduce major cardiovascular events, heart attacks, stroke, cardiac revascularisations or CVD death. An [earlier study](#) of over 14,000 men reached the same conclusions.

Fish Oil

Many fish oil producers have been deceiving the public about the content of their oil. Of 32 brands of supplements examined, only three contained quantities of omega-3 fatty acids near the claimed levels. Many of the supplements were contaminated with oxidised fish oil which could promote the formation of fatty deposits in the arteries, which is the opposite of what consumers are expecting.

[The new study](#) conducted by Newcastle University, NSW and Auckland University, NZ, drew attention to longstanding deficiencies in Australia's complementary medicines regulation. This includes no pre-market evaluation of sponsors' products against compositional quality standards or promotional claims, limited and poorly targeted post-market surveillance and a lack of effective penalties which would deter sponsors from repeatedly breaching TGA regulations.

Homeopathy—It doesn't work

The long-awaited [National Health & Medical Research Council \(NHMRC\) Statement on homeopathy](#) was released on 11 March 2015. FSM contributed submissions to this report.

The [NHRMC press release](#) concluded, *"there is no good quality evidence to support the claim that homeopathy is effective in treating health conditions."* The review found no good quality, well-designed studies with enough participants to support the idea that homeopathy works better than a placebo, or causes health improvements equal to those of another treatment. FSM also put out a [media release](#).

Vaccination News

Following the recent [death of West Australian baby](#), Riley Hughes, from pertussis (whooping cough), the WA Health Minister has stated that the pertussis vaccine will be offered free to all West Australian women in the third trimester of pregnancy in a bid to provide infants with protection against this killer disease in their first six-weeks of life. Since the announcement, [New South Wales](#), [Victoria](#) and the [ACT](#) have come on board, announcing funding for boosters for pregnant mothers. Queensland has been subsidizing third-trimester boosters since 2014.



Community action is growing in response to alarming pockets of low vaccination uptake, particularly in areas like Mullumbimby in Northern NSW. [Northern Rivers Vaccination Supporters](#) and [Light For Riley](#) are promoting a "No Vax-No Visit" policy for families with vulnerable infants. This simple idea would allow parents to open a dialogue with family and friends around vaccination, and hopefully make it easier for parents to protect their children from exposure to vaccine-preventable diseases.

Anti-vaccination tour: Cancelled

Following the cancellation by venue operators [across four states](#), a controversial US anti-vaccination campaigner [cancelled her Australian tour](#), saying she felt threatened by "pro vaccine extremists" and "anti-free-speech terrorists". However, the only threats made were by an anti-vaccine campaigner who threatened to burn down one property and bomb another if it cancelled her seminars. Seven venues in Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and the Gold Coast had been booked for the eleven seminars and dinners.

Universities

FSM continues to challenge universities to run only evidence-based courses in health related subjects.

Central Queensland University (CQU)

Associate Professor Sharyn Eaton is the new Discipline Leader, CQU, School of Medical & Applied Sciences (Chiropractic). A past president of the NSW Chiropractic Board, Eaton was [head of the chiropractic department](#) at Macquarie University and was also the [Policy Director](#) of the Chiropractors Association of Australia (National) Ltd (CAAN). The CAAN supports the unscientific 'subluxation' theory as the cause of illness.

Southern Cross University

The course, HLT00255 – Introductory Homeopathy (part of their [Bachelor of Naturopathy](#) School of Health & Human Sciences) – appears to have been cancelled. Searching their web page for this course, "no results" were found for 2015.

University of Melbourne

FSM wrote to the Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, about our concerns about a conference being arranged for his medical students, from the Australian Integrative Medicine Association & UnityHealth. The aim was to introduce them to 'Integrative Medicine', which was presented as an official conference endorsed by Melbourne University. We pointed out that in 2013, UnityHealth used University of Sydney logos in its promotion until, at our urging, the university stopped them from doing so. We also pointed out that a number of the modalities being incorporated into practices advertising 'Integrative Medicine' have recently been examined by an expert committee chaired by the Chief Medical Officer and that no evidence for their clinical effectiveness was found.

FSM strongly supports educating the next generation of doctors to ensure that they know what 'alternative' approaches are being offered to their patients and to guide them appropriately. We raised concerns that this conference did not contain the right balance of information to enable students to critically appraise what they were hearing.

FSM received a positive response from the

Dean. In relation to the 'Integrative Medicine' session, he said that it was designed by students and that he agreed that the link to UnityHealth and parts of the abstract were of concern. He thanked us for alerting him to the session. He suspected that it *"did not have the right balance"* and that *"in the future sessions that address subjects such as these have a strong academic focus on the evidence"*.

Monash University

One of the Monash University medical students brought to our attention [a lecture](#) titled "Pharmacological herbal therapies", which was presented by a Director of Blackmores Institute. The lecture was part of the Pharmacology unit for 2nd year Monash medical students. It was conducted by Associate Professor Lesley Baum, author of several books on complementary medicines and an enthusiastic advocate for them. She is a Director of Blackmores Institute (part of Blackmores Limited). Logos for [Blackmores Institute](#) and [The National Institute for Complementary Medicine](#) were included on the slides, which also advertised Dr Baum's book.

FSM sent the presentation to Dr Ken Harvey, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, at Monash University. Sharing our concerns, Dr Harvey brought this to the attention of his university. While FSM and Dr Harvey appreciate that all health students should be encouraged to acquire a knowledge of complementary medicines, because of the widespread promotion and use of these products in the community, in his correspondence to his university, Dr Harvey pointed out *"it is important that students gain an understanding of the limitations of the Australian regulatory system for complementary medicine and that they are taught to critically appraise the information provided in the spirit of evidence-based medicine."*

Dr Harvey received a positive response from the Director of Year 1 & 2 Academic Programs for the MBBS course who stated, *"the lecture was not clear about its objectives and biases nor was it as critical (in terms of evidence) as it needed to have been"* and that he was *"very concerned about this lecture as it stands"*. He also assured Dr Harvey, *"a major end point is to ensure that an evidence based approach is at the forefront of all content delivered to students"* and that they were currently reviewing a range of related content. Dr Harvey was invited to be involved in further discussions.

Chiropractic & Osteopathy

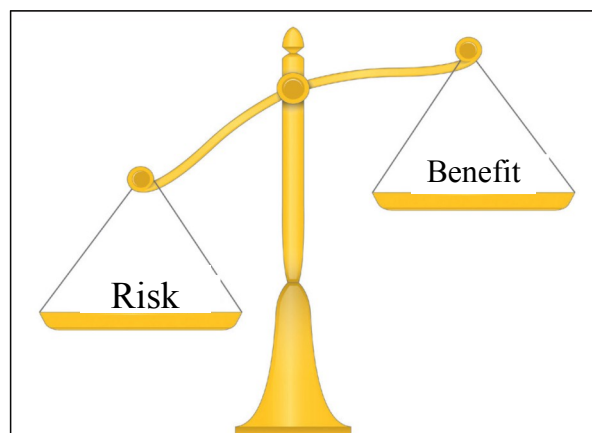
FSM wrote to the Federal Health Minister about manipulative therapies performed on infants and children in relation to recent proposed changes to the government's support for non-scientific health interventions by removing the Medicare rebate.

FSM stated that it was disappointing that chiropractic and osteopathy on children were not included in the proposed list. It was pointed out that there are education courses aimed at improving chiropractor's ability to expand their practices (approved by the Chiropractic Board of Australia), that many chiropractors continue to express an intent to increase use of the Medicare rebate. Children and families are being targeted by recruited midwives, and child health nurses used as sources of referrals.

FSM's major concern is that chiropractic treatment in Australia includes the manipulation of babies and children to the point of producing discomfort; screening for scoliosis, where chiropractic has no proven role; 'chiropractic wellness', where parents are told that regular adjustments will keep children healthy. FSM also deplores their anti-vaccination stance. It was pointed out that, while osteopathy is similarly lacking in basic scientific principles, it is generally less likely to do harm than chiropractic; but again practitioner claims mislead parents. Both chiropractors and osteopaths are vulnerable to misdiagnosis, thereby delaying medical assessment and effective treatment. FSM concerns also focused on the practice on children which requires a set of beliefs regarding cause of illness, with no scientific basis and which should be considered alongside homeopathy, faith healing and reiki.

From 2008-2013, [funding for chiropractic treatments for children](#) aged up to 14 had increased by nearly 185 per cent. The biggest increase has been in girls aged up to four, where subsidies jumped 300 per cent.

The response from the Health Minister's department was disappointing, as it stated that there were no Medicare items for the provision of chiropractic and osteopathy services for children and that Medicare rebates for alternative health practitioners are payable only through Chronic



Disease Management (CDM), which needed a referral by a GP.

FSM wrote to The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians informing it of the inappropriate and potentially dangerous practice of some chiropractors who try to turn breech fetuses in utero from 30 weeks gestation, using the so-called Webster technique without apparent obstetric qualifications, facilities or knowledge of potential adverse events or contraindications to fetal version. FSM asked RANZCOG to alert its obstetric Fellows and Members to this concerning intervention and to report its use and any possible adverse outcomes. These currently go unreported and there is no register of chiropractic complications of any kind. RANZCOG acknowledged the potential problem but has yet to alert its Fellows to alternative practitioners treating pregnant women and newborns and the extent of these practices remain hidden.

"...inappropriate and potentially dangerous practice of some chiropractors who try to turn breech fetuses in utero from 30 weeks gestation, using the so-called Webster technique..."

Pharmacies

Australian Pharmacy Liaison Forum (APLF)

FSM has sent three letters to the Australian Pharmacy Liaison Forum (APLF), the independent group of representatives from all key pharmacy organizations, about the sale and endorsement of homeopathic remedies and naturopathic clinics in pharmacies.

We pointed out (28 October 2014), *"in medical practice the practitioner is legally liable for the mistakes of their associated paramedical staff in their premises and for their referral to that person for care. Pharmacists have the same professional liability."*



Following discussion at their 8 December 2014 meeting, they responded, *"the APLF notes that it is not a regulatory body and therefore does not have the authority to address these matters."* However, earlier correspondence had stated that the final NHMRC document on homeopathy would be used *"as supporting documentation to establish an unequivocal position in this matter"*.

FSM, in its press release on homeopathy, stated that it is now irresponsible for pharmacies to sell and promote homeopathic remedies even as a placebo therapy, as they may delay correct diagnoses and effective therapy.

The Annual National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) Congress 2015

Addressed to the President and Committee of the National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association and delegates, an [open letter](#) from FSM was distributed to the delegates. FSM raised concerns about the promotion of unproven medicines and supplements in pharmacies, as the promotion of pseudo-science results in misinformation and confusion among patients, resulting in poor health decisions and poor outcomes and risks the reputation of Pharmacists. The letter requested that the pharmacy profession *"formally address the issue of CAM promotion in the Community Pharmacy setting"* and invited NAPSA to involve itself in the emerging discussion about these issues and to place them on future agendas. FSM offered our resources and expertise should future meetings or conferences wish to address this important topic. There has been no response to date to our letter.

Therapeutic Goods Administration

FSM is continuing to campaign to ensure that only devices with proven evidence of safety and effectiveness should be offered to the Australian public.

FSM [wrote to](#) the National Manager, Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) about *"the protection of Australians from the bogus "pathology" BICOM test"*. This is an electrodermal device (similar to the VEGA device, cancelled in 2010), pointing out that it has been investigated by the TGA for over 4 years! Our letter included a report of over [50 websites](#) making therapeutic claims for the BICOM.

We highlighted practitioner claims that this de-

vice is able to cure [papilloma virus](#) and that it claimed to be a 90% effective intervention for [smoking cessation](#), which also attracts private health insurance rebates. The sponsor of BICOM claims that it is effective in killing viruses. A [complaint to the Advertising Standards Association \(ASA\)](#) in the UK against claims made for the BICOM, including that it could be used for *"Ebola Treatments and Testing"* was upheld.

A request for a direct contact with the National Manager, TGA, about BICOM and other invalid pathology tests such as live blood analysis, which are widely used in Australia, and which are under TGA jurisdiction, was ignored.

World Health Organization

On 26 March 2014, FSM received an invitation, along with other Cochrane colleagues, to attend a one-day meeting at the World Health Organization (WHO) to discuss a new focus on safety and quality of care, with the Department of Service Delivery and Safety (SDS) more broadly, and with Traditional and Complementary Medicine (TCM) in particular. This followed the removal, at our request, of a page on the WHO website which referred primarily to 1970's research claiming that acupuncture was proven to be effective for up to 100 illnesses and disorders, including dysentery, whooping cough and depression.

However, more than 12 months have passed and the meeting has still not taken place, because of the impact of the Ebola epidemic on the resources of WHO. However, FSM received a response from Dr Zhang Qi, Traditional and Complementary Medicine (TCM), who informed us that two meetings had already been held on TCM. The outcome was a recommendation to organize a pilot project/activity on ensure the quality and safety of TCM services, with acupuncture being selected as the one in the first stage of the proposed pilot activity. WHO Collaborating Centers for Traditional Medicine would be involved in the proposed pilot activity.

Dr Qi stated that he would keep us informed of the *"progress of the proposed activity and identify a proper time for organizing the meeting in Geneva mentioned earlier, which will invite you and other relevant colleagues for your inputs"*.

Australian Naturopathic Practitioners Association (ANPA)/ Pathology



Hundreds of naturopaths appear to be in breach of the TGA advertising code of conduct by promoting and utilizing pathology tests not listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG).

FSM wrote to the Australian Naturopathic Practitioners Association (ANPA), pointing out that members using these tests should be regarded as guilty of professional misconduct, according to their own code of

conduct. Many of the claims are based on the bogus pathology test known as Hemaview or 'live blood analysis' (LBA). This 'test', thoroughly discredited by the Royal Australian College of Pathologists, has not been accepted onto the ARTG.

http://www.naturaltherapypages.com.au/natural_medicine/live_blood_analysis

We asked them to both remove the claims made on the ANPA website for LBA, and to notify their members that they had done so, and to direct members who advertise LBA to remove any claims for this discredited pathology test and, of course, to cease using it.

FSM has asked the ANPA to indicate what relevant action is planned. We await a response.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)

The independent three-year review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) is now completed. FSM sent in a submission which included a five-page summary of [our correspondence with APHRA](#) from 23 June 2013 to 1 September 2014, and a number of reports detailing the false and misleading claims made by hundreds of chiropractors and osteopaths who are breaching the National Law. FSM under-

stands that this review is now with the Health Minister and is waiting for its release. According to the [report of the meeting](#), Health Ministers will consider the recommendations from the NRAS Review and discuss them further at their meeting in August 2015.

FSM will meet with AHPRA when the review is published.

Tertiary Education Quality & Standards Agency (TEQSA)

A Bachelor of Science (Homeopathy) 'degree' is being run by the alternative pharmaceutical company ParaPharm Pty Ltd, trading as Paramount College of Natural Medicine. Concerned about the application for renewal of accreditation for this degree, Dr Ken Harvey wrote to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), citing freedom of information, under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act (1982). He requested relevant material submitted and/or obtained from external stakeholders (and their qualifications) and any re-

view &/or assessment of this material by TEQSA officers.

The response from TEQSA was disappointing. They cited 90 documents that fell within the scope of Dr Harvey's request, but only 2 were released, the remainder being withheld for a variety of reasons, including that they would *"reduce the value of ParaPharm's business operations as a higher education provider"*, and that the third party appeal rights have not *"been exhausted under the FOI Act"*.

Private Health Insurance

Following the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC)'s position statement on homeopathy, two of Australia's biggest health insurers, [NIB & Medibank](#) have announced that they are cutting the amount they will refund patients for alternative therapies.

The Chief Medical Officer's review into 31 natural therapies has been finalized, but not yet released. The review's purpose was to ensure that taxpayer funds paid through the Medicare Rebate, subsidize only natural therapies underpinned by a credible evidence base demonstrating their clinical efficacy, cost effectiveness, safety and quality. FSM understands that the review awaits a response from the Federal Health Minister.

FSM Submissions

In April 2014 the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) published the terms of reference for the three-year review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme). FSM's submission to the review included a five-page summary of our correspondence with AHPRA <http://www.scienceinmedicine.org.au/images/pdf/ahpra-correspondencesummary.pdf> from 23 June 2013 to 1 September 2014. We also included copies of earlier reports which had requested reviews of both the actions of the Chiropractic Board of Australia and the Osteopathy Board of Australia, along with reports that documented displayed images from hundreds of chiropractic websites targeting babies and children and a range of testimonials published on registered practitioner websites.

A Humorous Look at Alternative Medicine

Jimmy Kimmel Live

[A Message for the Anti-Vaccine Movement](#)

[Jimmy Kimmel's Update on the Anti-Vaccination Discussion](#)



Channel Ten's The Project

[Paleo-fail-io](#) with Kate & Kate from the Katering Show

Publications and other media

Scientific Papers

David Hawkes, Joanne Benhamu, Tom Sidwell, Rhianna Miles, Rachael A. Dunlop, [Revisiting adverse reactions to vaccines: A critical appraisal of Autoimmune Syndrome Induced by Adjuvants \(ASIA\)](#), Journal of Autoimmunity, Volume 59, May 2015, Pages 77-84.

'The Bitter Pill' - Australasian Science

Natalie Cutrie [Is Evidence-based Medicine in Palliative Care Doing More Harm than Good?](#)

Harriet Hall [Everything You've Heard about Acupuncture is Wrong](#)

Harriet Hall [Evidence for Acupuncture: What Do Scientific Studies Show?](#)

Peter Speck [Why do we pay parents who won't vaccinate their kids?](#)

Lauren Giorgio [What's the Evidence, Ms Kardashian?](#)

MJA Insight

Sue Ieraci [Food fallacies](#)

Ken Harvey [Code breaches](#)

Publications and other media ctd...

Crikey

Loretta Marron

[Tired, sluggish, bloated? Time to detox? "Don't buy the hype"](#)

Michael Foley

[Water fluoridation: why is it still being debated?](#)

edzardernst.com

Edzard Ernst

[The final verdict on homeopathy: it's a placebo](#)

[When will pharmacies finally stop selling homeopathic remedies?](#)

[What do multivitamins do? They render your urine more expensive](#)

[Subluxation, a myth that is deeply ingrained in the chiropractic mind-set](#)

[Chronic low back pain: exercise is better than chiropractic](#)

[Chiropractic neck manipulation can cause stroke](#)

[Acupuncture: a treatment to die for?](#)

I2P

Loretta Marron

[Fish oil – is it on the nose?](#)

[Is chelation an 'integrative' scam?](#)

[Is it 'Wellness' or 'Wellne\\$\\$'?](#)

[Will 'Complementary medicines \(CM\)s' save us billions?](#)

The Conversation

Mick Vagg

[Time to stop abusing the NHMRC for ideological purposes](#)

[Make your New Year's health resolution about prevention. That's where the big gains are](#)

Ken Harvey

[Krill oil marketing: a case study of Australia's broken regulations](#)

Ian Musgrave

[In the vaccination debate, science is just getting its boots on](#)

[So, the NHMRC has found homeopathy doesn't work. Now how do we get the message across?](#)

[2014, a bad year for homeopathy](#)

Science-Based Medicine

Scott Gavura

[Detox - what they don't want you to know](#)

Mark Crislip

[Acupuncture Odds and Ends](#)

Scott Gavura

[Should the FDA crack down on homeopathic "remedies"?](#)

Steven Novella

[Another review finds homeopathy worthless](#)

Forbes

Steven Salzberg

[A really bad week for the supplements industry](#)

[NIH Distorts Report On Chiropractic And Stroke Risk](#)

Please let **FSM** know if you have published any relevant articles, been on radio or TV (with links, if possible), or any of your activities that support the objectives of Friends of Science in Medicine.